

back in Chicago playing in rock bands [when Shadowfax broke up for a while], I

missed the kind of stuff Shadowfax was doing. The guys in the group are so versa-

tile that we have been able to do a lot of other projects anyway."—*Robyn Flans*

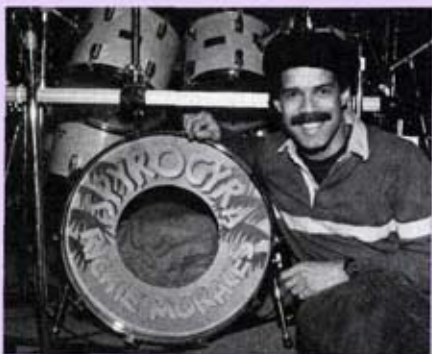


Photo by Rick Malkin

When **Richie Morales** joined Spyro Gyra, he found many special challenges involved in playing with this well-established group. "The challenge was to learn the music, and satisfy the needs of the players and bandleader. Also, since the group already had a following and a strongly identifiable sound, I had to blend in with that, but at the same time, contribute some of my own identity to the music.

Having played with bands like the Brecker Brothers, I was used to performing in musically challenging situations, but the bands I had played with in the past did not have an identifiable popular base."

At the time that Richie joined Spyro Gyra, the group had already toured for about three months into the year, and they had their program already worked out. Richie had to learn about 15 tunes in the space of three weeks. "There was a certain amount of pressure involved from that standpoint. Our first gig was in Cleveland. It was a big jazz festival type of thing. There were upwards of 10,000 people there, so there was a great potential for disaster.

"To the band's credit, after playing with the same drummer for six years, they were ready for something fresh. Once they heard what I had to offer, they trusted me. Basically, as long as I played the arrangement correctly, the more of myself that I put in, the more they seemed to like it. It's

pretty much a song-oriented band, even though it's instrumental and jazzy. The way the songs are written largely dictates what is to be played."

As for Spyro Gyra's current projects and future plans, Richie explains, "We just finished doing basic tracks for our next album. We started recording in December and we got the tracks down in about two or three weeks. We also did some jamming which was edited into some tunes and may possibly be included in the album. All the regular band members played on the album. Also, we're hitting the road again in 1985. This is a very hard-working band. Sometimes they do as many as 150 to 200 dates a year. First, we're doing a tour of Colorado for ten days and then we may tour the Caribbean. The album should be released in May or June, after which the jazz festival season will begin. We'll be involved in a lot of those jazz shows. We're just going to get out there and play for the people some more."—*Susan Hannum*

**Jimmy Carl Black** was the original drummer for the Mothers Of Invention. During his years with Frank Zappa, he played a huge number of concerts, and recorded the albums *Freak Out*, *Absolutely Free*, *We're Only In It For The Money*, *Lumpy Gravy*, *Ruben & The Jets*, *Uncle Meat*, *Weasels Ripped My Flesh*, and *Burnt Weenie Sandwich* before Zappa disbanded the group in 1970. Black was also featured in Zappa's 1971 movie, *200 Motels*, a "documentary" of life on the road which also featured Ringo Starr, Aynsley Dunbar, and the late Keith Moon. Ten years later, Jimmy made a cameo vocal appearance on a song from Zappa's *You Are What You Is* album. He is a founding member of The Grandmothers, a group comprised mostly of ex-Mothers.

Asked about the original Mothers, Jimmy says, "It was the best rock 'n' roll band in the world! A lot of people didn't think so; I mean, we were the 'Kings of the Underground.' We got nothing played on the radio, or anything like that. But I think we were playing the most innovative music happening at the time. Frank has made references in interviews that he didn't think much of us as players, but in my opinion, I

still think the original Mothers Of Invention was the best band he ever had. They may not have been the best *technical* band, but I'll tell you right now, as far as putting on a show, we were *the* best band in the world. We never played the same show twice. The shows he's doing now are not spontaneous, and that's what *made* the Mothers Of Invention. We rehearsed so often and played so much that we had a telepathic thing happening. Everybody knew what Frank was going to do before he did it. It was magic, and he's never had that since. He just has *sidemen* with him now. They're great guys, though."

After the original Mothers broke up, Jimmy started a band called Geronimo Black. "That lasted till 1973, and then I moved back to El Paso. I had one band—Big Sonny & The Low Boys—that recorded both a single and an album. It's real hard to get—R&B stuff. In 1980, I did an album called *Clearly Classic*—a clear, plastic blob-shaped record. I pressed 500 copies, and made them as collector's items. It had eight 1950's R&B songs. Then, I did two albums with the Grandmothers [Rhino Records], and then another Geronimo Black album on Helios

Records. Now I'm playing drums in a Gospel group in Austin. This Gospel thing is a really interesting trip for me. I've always wanted to do it, but never had the chance to. They're all good players, and they all sing their butts off! I also have a little quartet—a rhythm & blues thing that I front as a singer. I'm also going to put out a four-song EP this year. I have a version of "Big Leg Emma" that I want to record, along with three of my own songs. I'd like to really get some sort of label thing happening.

"I have the master here of a yet-to-be-released third Grandmothers album. There's a song on it called "What Was Zappa Really Like" that Don Preston wrote. We want to get back together and do some stuff. We do a lot of fusion, plus we do a lot of old Mothers stuff that Frank doesn't do anymore. We've been to Europe about three times so far, but we haven't played much in the States. This time, when we get back together, I'd like to do an intensive tour of the USA. I think there are a lot of fans out there who would really get off on it." —*Bob Saydlowski, Jr.*

Look for an album **Steve Gadd** did called *Gadd About*, which was initially released in Japan and finally the U.S. As usual, Steve has been keeping busy with such projects as Al Jarreau, Diana Ross' next LP, playing live in London with Al Jarreau, in Japan with Eddie Gomez and Chick Corea, in Zurich with the Steve Gadd Quartet and writing an instructional book which should be out soon. **Tris Imboden** on Kenny Loggins' recent release and currently on the road. **Ralph Cooper**

on recent Air Supply release. **Sandy Genaro** on Cyndi Lauper's upcoming album. **Jim Keltner** on soundtrack for *Brewster's Millions* with Ry Cooder. **Ricky Lawson** on Maurice White's solo album. **Lynn Coulter** on Del Monte commercial. **Michael Botts** on Mickey Gilley's new LP. **John Ferraro** on Michelle Pilar's recent release, with **Michael Fischer** on percussion. John can also be heard on Tim Minner's and Lisa Whelchel's current Nissi releases. **Mark Craney** has journeyed to

England to be with a band called Esquire. **Larrie Londin** on new projects by Atlanta, Ronnie Milsap and Louise Mandrell. **Ron Tutt** on Chris Hilman's recent *Desert Rose* release. **Andy Newmark** recently in the studio with Nils Lofgren. A new album is due out this month on Landmark records by **Jack DeJohnette**, on which Jack plays piano; the drumming is handled by **Freddy Waits**. **Don Osborne** on tour with Mel Torme.—*Robyn Flans*

